

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2011 @ 6:30 p.m.  
RI Department of Administration  
Conference Room A  
1 Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI

**Approved Minutes**

**ATTENDANCE**

**TAC members present:**

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair	Public Member
Ms. Melanie Jewett Army	City of Providence
Ms. Sue Barker	Greenways Alliance
Mr. Dan Baudouin	Providence Foundation
Mr. Corey Bobba	Representing Ms. Barbara Breslin, Federal Highway Administration
Mr. Alan Brodd	Town of Cumberland
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public member
Ms. Ann Clarke representing	Representing Mr. Kevin Dillon, RI Airport Corporation
Dr. Judith Drew	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Mr. Robert Murray	Public Member
Mr. Paul Romano	Public Member
Mr. Robert Shawver	RI Department of Transportation
Ms. Jane Sherman	Public Member
Mr. Mark Therrien	RI Public Transit Authority
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Economic Development Corporation

**TAC members absent:**

Mr. Mark Carruolo	City of Warwick
Mr. Russ Chateaufneuf	RI Department of Environmental Management
Ms. Marilyn Cohen	RI Chapter, American Planning Association
Mr. Barry Schiller	RI Sierra Club
Mr. Henry Sherlock	Construction Industries of RI
Mr. Jim Soctomah	Narragansett Indian Tribe
Mr. Everett Stuart	RI Association of Railroad Passengers
Dr. Robert Vanderslice	RI Department of Health
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

**Others in attendance:**

Ms. Lea Anthony-Hitchen	Town of East Greenwich
Ms. Diane Badorek	RI Department of Transportation
Ms. Meredith Brady	RI Senate Fiscal
Mr. Abel Collins	Sierra Club

Ms. Deanna Casey  
Mr. Jerry Elmer  
Ms. Eugenia Marks  
Ms. Deborah Miller  
Mr. Kevin Viveiros

AARP  
Conservation Law Foundation  
Audubon Society of RI  
AARP  
Pare Corporation

**Statewide Planning Staff Present:**

Mr. Jared Rhodes  
Ms. Linsey Cameron  
Ms. Ronnie Sirota

Chief  
Supervising Planner  
Principal Planner

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**1. Call to Order**

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

**2. Approval of February 24, 2011 Meeting Minutes**

Upon motion of Mr. Murray to approve and seconded by Mr. Shawver, the February 24, 2011 minutes were accepted unanimously.

**3. Public Comment on Agenda Items**

There was none.

**4. Governor Chafee's FY 2012 Transportation Financing Proposal, RIDOT – Informational Presentation**

Mr. Shawver began by reviewing the transportation funding crisis that the State of Rhode Island currently faces. He then presented the transportation funding changes proposed under Governor Chafee's budget plan.

According to Mr. Shawver, the first proposed change includes placing vehicle registration fees in a dedicated transportation fund to be used for paying off the debt service on existing bonds. In summary, he explained that Rhode Island is currently paying more in debt service than it is applying to projects and that its annual debt service costs will soon reach \$70 million per year. This plan will slowly replace the practice of depending on general obligation bonds and will utilize funds collected through vehicular registration fees instead. It will not however create new funding sources for further capital investment.

The second proposed change intends to begin addressing the State's need for additional transportation revenue sources by calling for the formal assessment of tolling options within the State. According to Mr. Shawver, this would be a comprehensive examination of all

possible toll zones in Rhode Island. One possible toll location to be assessed is on I-95 near the Connecticut border. This location alone is estimated to be able to produce \$40 million in additional revenues per year. Other possible locations that will be studied include the Sakonnet River Bridge. Mr. Shawver stressed that RIDOT needs the RI General Assembly's approval just to submit an application to FHWA; that the approval of the associated budget article authorizes the study only and that additional approvals from the General Assembly will be needed in order to actually institute tolling anywhere in the State. Any resulting toll revenues would be used to keep the interstate system in good repair.

Mr. Shawver then opened the floor to discussion. In response Mr. Brodd first asked how many years remained on paying off the GARVEE bonds. Mr. Shawver replied that they wouldn't be paid off until 2021.

Ms. Sherman then asked why there was consideration to locate tolls on the southern boundary of I-95 instead of the northern Massachusetts border. Mr. Shawver responded that the northern part of I-95 has too many bypasses that would enable people to avoid the tolls.

Ms. Clarke next asked how much the study was expected to cost. Mr. Shawver indicated that it would be approximately \$250,000 for a preliminary study.

Mr. Murray asked if I-195 would be included in the tolling study. Mr. Shawver replied that it would not.

Mr. Baudouin commented that other sources of revenue should also be examined in order to present a comprehensive analysis. Mr. Shawver replied that all possibilities will be reviewed.

Mr. Walker asked if Connecticut had to be a co-applicant on the tolling study application. Mr. Shawver stated that Connecticut would not since possible tolling plazas would be located within Rhode Island, most likely between Exit 1 and Exit 2. Plazas would consist of open road tolling and be constructed on both the north and south bound lanes.

Mr. Baudouin asked if the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) could benefit from tolling revenues. Mr. Shawver indicated that Federal Highway Administration requirements would not allow the revenues to be directed to RIPTA but pointed out that they would free up other resources that could potentially benefit RIPTA. Mr. Murray asked if the toll revenues could be used to expand I-95. Mr. Shawver answered that they could and noted that toll revenues could also be used to expand I-295 but not Rt. 6 or 10 for example since they are not on the federal interstate highway system. Mr. Walker asked if the proposed Rt. 4 North / I-95 South interchange would be eligible to use tolling revenues. Mr. Shawver indicated that they could given the direct connection to the federal interstate highway.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Shawver concluded by noting that he was very pleased to see this issue being addressed at the highest levels for the first time in many years and that

he was optimistic that this could signify a structural change in Rhode Island's transportation funding that would eventually remove the debt load on future generations.

Mr. Rhodes added that all of the items Mr. Shawver discussed could be found in Article 22 and 34 of the Governor's budget and House Bill, H5894.

#### **5. Coalition for Transportation Choices 2011 Legislative and Policy Agenda, Coalition for Transportation Choices – Informational Presentation**

Mr. Jerry Elmer, staff attorney for the Conservation Law Foundation, spoke on behalf of the Coalition for Transportation Choices (CTC) in favor of legislative bills, S-148 and H-5789, the Transportation Investment and Debt Reduction Act of 2011. Mr. Elmer stated that this Act addresses transportation funding by allocating 50 percent of funds to RIDOT, 35 percent to RIPTA, and 15 percent to the cities and towns. According to Mr. Elmer, one reason for the current funding problem is due to a decline in gas tax receipts, of which the proceeds go to transportation funding. The other reason is that Rhode Island has had to borrow every year in order to receive and utilize the federal transportation matching funds. This is the first year RIDOT is spending more than 50 percent of their share of the gas tax, not on road maintenance, but on debt service which is projected to increase sharply in the future.

The pending bill would raise the automobile registration fee by \$20; place the funds in a new restricted receipt account and result in a projected \$20 million in additional annual revenues. Mr. Elmer continued by stating that the bill also requires all of RIDOT and RIPTA's transportation projects utilizing this funding to gain approval from the TAC. Mr. Elmer commended the Governor's transportation funding proposal for there is a need to identify new sources of funding to reduce the debt. However, Mr. Elmer stated that he was also concerned that the proposal does not allocate any funding to RIPTA as opposed to the 35 percent proposed in the CTC bill.

Mr. Elmer next pointed out that Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed recently appointed members to the Transportation Finance Study Commission. While sponsors of the bill realize the commission will not solve all the transportation funding problems, additional sources of revenue may come from the committee's efforts. Mr. Elmer also explained that the CTC is indifferent as to the methods of funding and that the method should be the least controversial. He felt there are a lot of opportunities to harmonize the Governor's proposal with the CTC's bill.

TAC member's questions and discussion followed Mr. Elmer's presentation. Mr. Brodd first applauded the proposal to support local roads. According to Mr. Brodd, Massachusetts has always contributed to a local road repair and maintenance fund and he felt it was time that Rhode Island did the same. In addition Mr. Brodd expressed concern with the fact that the Governor's budget does not include increased funding for RIPTA.

Mr. Baudouin next asked how it can be assured that the revenues will be used solely for transportation purposes and not diverted to other uses by the General Assembly. Mr. Shawver

and Mr. Elmer indicated that there are no assurances. It is all subject to the General Assembly's appropriation unless it is in the state constitution. Mr. Elmer stated that even with a new trust fund, revenues could be redirected by the general assembly through the annual budget process.

Mr. Therrien then commented that although he is pleased to see that the Governor's Office has gotten the transportation financing conversation rolling, he is hopeful that the end result will include some additional revenues for RIPTA as put forward in the CTC proposal.

Dr. Judith Drew commended the Coalition for Transportation Choices, especially for their work on Complete Streets. Dr. Drew stated that she has not heard how Rhode Island can become more efficient serving people with disabilities and would like to know what is being done.

Mr. Murray stated that as a member the TAC and the previous Governors' Blue Ribbon Panels, Rhode Island is only one of two states that do not have a dedicated fund for transportation. Mr. Murray suggested that a dedicated transportation fund could be put into the state constitution. Mr. Murray also stated that approximately 24 percent of transportation funding generated by other states goes back to the municipalities; as opposed to Rhode Island municipalities which receive none. Mr. Murray expressed frustration over the promises that are not kept by lawmakers.

In concluding the discussion Mr. Elmer stated that he would welcome TAC member support for the CTC's proposed legislation.

## **6. Complete Streets Legislation, Sierra Club and AARP – Informational Presentation**

Mr. Abel Collins, from the Sierra Club explained the concept of complete streets on the federal and state levels, as well as in Rhode Island. Mr. Collins thanked Mr. Rhodes and Ms. Cameron for inviting him to speak before the TAC. According to Mr. Collins, the purpose of the proposed complete streets legislation is to have streets designed and operated that provide safe access to all users. While complete streets is a new term, similar concepts like "street scape" and "context sensitive solutions" were used in the past. Mr. Collins stated that there are initiatives at all levels within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) for adopting the complete streets program. There is talk of rolling complete streets into the federal transportation reauthorization bill. According to Mr. Collins, there have been fourteen states enacting complete streets legislation in the country. If the legislation creating a complete streets council in Rhode Island is enacted into law, it could make the state a national leader for complete streets. According to Mr. Collins, complete streets will benefit Rhode Island even more since the state has a significant aging population which is why the AARP is behind this piece of legislation.

Mr. Collins stated that the issue of complete streets is a uniting issue for many people and organizations. Mr. Collins referred to the Complete Streets informational materials that were

included in TAC member's packets, stating that so far three municipalities have passed complete streets resolutions with two additional pending.

Mr. Collins explained that in Providence he is working with RIDOT and the local neighborhood on the Elmwood Avenue project where they are adding bump-outs, shared lanes, and other complete streets elements. There is a groundswell of support for complete streets. An important goal for the proposed legislation is to get complete streets language added into municipal comprehensive plans. According to Mr. Collins, there are other programs at the state level such as the Rhode Island Department of Health's (DOH) Healthy Places by Design and the Safe Routes to School Program, that incorporate elements of complete streets. Mr. Collins stated that he believes the complete streets council would be a great means for channeling and coordinating the efforts of various agencies and organizations.

Ms. Deanna Casey of the AARP gave the second part of the complete streets presentation. Ms. Casey explained that AARP has 130,000 members in Rhode Island and the concept of complete streets is critical to an independent agenda for senior citizens.

Discussion by TAC members followed. Ms. Clarke applauded the complete street concept and stated that maintenance, particularly snow removal, is an important issue. The municipalities need to know they are responsible for snow removal. Dr. Drew added that uncleared sidewalks are unacceptable when people waiting for a bus cannot even get to the bus because of the snow.

Mr. Collins acknowledged that there were some reservations expressed when the TAC members discussed the proposed legislation at their last meeting. He stated that he is open to amendments and that the legislation was based on that used to create the Greenways Council. The Council would include the Rhode Island Departments of Administration, Department of Health, and Department of Transportation, and RIPTA. According to Mr. Collins the idea behind the Council is that there are a lot of projects going on and if everyone can work together, in the best case Rhode Island would end up the leader.

Dr. Drew asked Mr. Collins if he reviewed the proposed legislation with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities to see if they agree. Mr. Collins stated he has not contacted the Commission on Disabilities.

Mr. Cassidy, referring to last month's TAC meeting, explained that there was a lot of support for the concept of complete streets. The question then was why the need for a complete streets council. Mr. Cassidy continued to state that many communities and agencies support the concept of complete streets, as well as efforts to ensure RIDOT projects comply with the concept however there would need to be a lot of effort directed towards implementing the mechanism of a council. In comparison, the Greenway Council and the prior issue of bikeways, was a fight to get the concept of bike paths accepted, advocacy was needed. This is not the case with the complete streets as it seems everyone is on board to do this. Mr. Cassidy feels the complete streets program is going well. He stated the resources needed to establish a

council could be better directed. Mr. Collins acknowledged that the language for complete streets has pretty much been law in Rhode Island since 1997. He stated that while Safe Routes to School is a great program, Rhode Island is still falling behind other states in building the complete streets infrastructure. According to Mr. Collins the complete streets council could plug in various groups to make this effort successful. He speculated that perhaps the council would not speed up programs but that the concept should at least be given a chance.

Mr. Cassidy asked if instead of creating a complete streets council, why not have the Coalition for Transportation Choices (CTC) coordinate complete streets initiatives since they are already established as an organization to advocate for transportation choices. Mr. Rhodes added that there are opportunities for the CTC to secure grant funding for this sort of initiative.

Mr. Walker stated that people need to be educated on these new techniques regarding bike lanes, as well as on the rules of the road regarding bicycles and pedestrians. Ms. Casey responded that AARP has a driver safety program addressing this as well as workshops. Mr. Walker emphasized that complete streets education needs to start early and be reinforced. He suggested that perhaps there should be a test for the renewal of licenses. Ms. Barker said that the Greenways Alliance and Rhode Island Bicycle Coalition have provided the Rhode Island Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) with educational materials. Mr. Collins responded that he is aware of the need for education. He could add municipal police departments, the Rhode Island Department of Education, and the DMV as agencies to the proposed complete streets council. According to Mr. Collins, there are a number of states that passed legislation creating councils.

## **7. Staff Report**

Ms. Cameron gave the staff report which included the following items:

**Blackstone Valley Meeting:** Staff attended a meeting two weeks ago with members of the Blackstone Valley Partnership. Staff updated the group on some of Statewide Planning's recent projects particularly the solicitation progress for the State Rail Plan.

**State Rail Plan:** Staff received some initial feedback that the \$100,000 budget is not going to be sufficient to produce a quality and comprehensive rail plan and are currently working with RIDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on tapping into some of our allocated federal funds to support the plan. With that in mind, the project solicitation deadline has been extended until the end of April.

**Transportation Forum:** The TAC and State Planning Council members received an invitation from the Governor to attend the transportation forum "A Wake up Call to Action – Rhode Island's Transportation Funding Crisis" on Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 1:00 in the Rotunda Room of the Providence Convention Center. It is co-sponsored by Governor Chafee, Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed, and Speaker of the House Gordon Fox. The moderator is Scott Wolf of Grow Smart Rhode Island. The Panel includes Michael Lewis, Director of RI DOT, and

former Maryland Governor Glendening who is now the President of Smart Growth America Leadership Institute. Ms. Cameron encouraged TAC members to attend.

Mr. Rhodes stated that Statewide Planning has received a request for a “no action TIP amendment” from RIPTA in relation to the Urban Core Connector Study. RIPTA had been awarded an additional \$200,000 discretionary grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Under the agreement with RIPTA, the grant amount classifies as a no action amendment. Mr. Rhodes will issue the approval correspondence.

Mr. Cassidy was concerned about the composition of the review committee for the State Rail Plan. He asked if there is a group to review it. Ms. Cameron said there is a state rail plan committee. Mr. Cassidy heard only one person from Blackstone Valley is on the committee. Mr. Rhodes stated two additional individuals from Blackstone Valley, Thomas Mann and Barney Heath have been placed on the notification list. Mr. Baudouin also requested to be added to the meeting notification list.

## **8. Additional Public Comment**

Ms. Eugenia Marks of the Audubon Society offered some comments regarding the complete streets presentation. She stated that she understands the concern about duplication of government efforts and budget constraints, as well as a shortage of personnel. However, she stated that one of the legitimate government functions is to coordinate various efforts. She also asked why Rhode Island’s bus stops are not cleared of snow. Ms. Marks related a situation where one person who lived in a group home was killed because there were no sidewalks to walk on. She added that people have been killed by traffic as they left bus stops because of inadequate markings on the streets and many cannot cross the streets. A coordinated structure in government is needed.

## **9. Other Business**

Mr. Baudouin asked what the TAC’s role should be regarding the various transportation financing bills that were before the General Assembly. He suggested it would be good to get involved in the conversation and provide information. The TAC might form some principles that need to be addressed. Mr. Shawver suggested TAC members get involved in the Senate hearings. Mr. Baudouin stated he was involved in the funding discussion having been on the Blue Ribbon Panel and also on a 1995 study. Mr. Baudouin stated that he was willing to serve on a sub-committee regarding the TAC’s involvement in the transportation funding discussion. Mr. Shawver stated that the CTC, AAA, road builders, and design engineers, testified in favor of the funding bill. Mr. Brodd stated that the TAC has not had a solicitation for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in the last few years because of a lack of funding. He stated there is a backlog of state and local projects that are still in the Study and Development category and it would be helpful to get the number of the projects that have been put into future years.

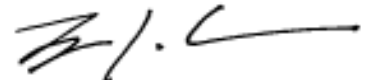


Mr. Cassidy suggested that it would be helpful if TAC members met to put together some speaking points to distribute to members who would like to testify at the upcoming public hearings on the proposed legislation on transportation financing. Mr. Rhodes responded that staff would appreciate the formation of a subcommittee on this issue. TAC volunteers for this subcommittee included: Mr. Baudouin, Mr. Cassidy, Mr. Shawver, Mr. Therrien, Mr. Brodd, and Ms. Melanie Jewett Army. Mr. Cassidy suggested the subcommittee draft guiding principles and come back to the TAC for feedback at the next meeting. Ms. Cameron said she will email the TAC when the sub-committee is meeting and invite other TAC members who would like to sit in. In answer to Mr. Collins asking to be on the sub-committee, Ms. Shocket explained that the sub-committee is restricted to TAC members, but Mr. Collins can give feedback to a sub-committee member if he would like.

## **10. Adjourn**

Upon motion of Mr. Brodd and Mr. Baudouin, the TAC unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Cameron', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Linsey Cameron, Secretary